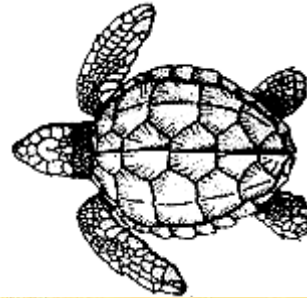


The Loggerhead

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Contents:

**WHO Meets to Discuss Health Aspects of
Tsunami Response**

Regional Early Warning System Developments

APEC Oceans Working Groups Meet

Funding Secured for Lao Dam Project

Upcoming Events



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WHO Meets to Discuss Health Aspects of Tsunami Response

Thailand hosted the World Health Organization's Conference on the Health Aspects of the Tsunami Disaster in Asia in Phuket, May 4-6. Over 400 experts from governments, NGOs, UN agencies, academic institutions and the private sector met to discuss and learn from shared experiences. The meeting focused on the immediate health sector response to the tsunami and analysis of its successes and failures.

Learning the lessons of the past was the grand theme of the conference, and participants voiced a wide spectrum of experience and viewpoints about how this is best accomplished. The challenge of truly capturing and implementing lessons-learned was illustrated by a small but highly recognizable point—the ubiquitous use of the word "unprecedented" to describe the tsunami. From a relief perspective, one presenter noted that the destruction and loss of life from the tsunami were not "unprecedented," citing everything from floods in Bangladesh (1991: 130,000 killed, 9 million homeless) to earthquakes in Iran (exactly one year before the tsunami the city of Bam was destroyed by an earthquake) to the constant death toll of malaria, AIDS and other diseases. Preventing future disasters from seeming unprecedented to relief workers is the goal.

Specific issues discussed include benchmarks and standards, funding, logistics and customs, assessment validity, gender issues, accountability, local capacity building, coordination of unaffiliated relief organizations, psychosocial issues, military involvement in humanitarian relief and the military model of command, control and communication structures. Inefficiencies, gaps and redundancies are inevitable, but improvements are always possible.

Regional Early Warning System Developments

Participants from 26 regional Indian Ocean countries and representatives from donor nations met in Mauritius April 14-16 for the Second International Coordination Meeting for the Development of

a Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System in the Indian Ocean. UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) and UN's International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN/ISDR) organized the meeting.

When completed, the multi-hazard system will cover 27 countries in and around the Indian Ocean. On the regional level, India, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and Australia expressed interest in setting up regional centers. These would function as monitoring and detection centers. On the national level, each country must develop a national early warning plan. Such plans would provide for disaster preparation, information dissemination and emergency response.

After the first tsunami coordination meeting, held in Paris March 3-8, Indian Ocean countries and international partners created a partial early warning system by partnering with existing Pacific Ocean warning centers. On March 28, a major earthquake was detected near northern Sumatra, Indonesia. The initial system was in place, and the NOAA Pacific Tsunami Warning Center in Hawaii and the Japan Meteorological Agency in Tokyo transmitted warning information to national contact points in the region. That system is still in place and will monitor the Indian Ocean area until local warning systems are online.

A declaration issued after the Mauritius meeting reaffirmed that participating countries are committed to open, free and unrestricted sharing of real-time tsunami-related observational data. According to the declaration, the IOC General Assembly will establish an intergovernmental coordination group to govern the Indian Ocean tsunami warning system. A blueprint for the Indian Ocean tsunami early warning system is expected at the next IOC General Assembly meeting at UNESCO's Paris headquarters June 21-30.

The United States Congress approved \$907.3 million for Indian Ocean tsunami relief and support operations. A portion of this will help fund early warning systems.

APEC Oceans Working Groups Meet

The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Marine Resources Conservation Working Group (MRC) and the APEC Fisheries Working Group (FWG) held concurrent meetings in Phuket, May 17-19, and then held a joint meeting on May 20. Both working groups are helping to plan the Second APEC Ocean-related Ministerial Meeting (AOMM2), to be held in Bali, September 16-17. A Senior Officials Meeting (SOM+5) will immediately precede AOMM2, September 13-15. AOMM1 was held in 2002 and produced the Seoul Oceans Declaration.

The goal of the AOMM2 is to produce a Bali Plan of Action for future APEC cooperation on oceans issues and to implement the strategies described in the Seoul Oceans Declaration. Major issues for action discussed at the working group meetings include marine debris, introduced marine pests, research and management of marine resources (both living and non-living), land-based pollution, climate change, standardized regulatory frameworks (especially for fishing), small enterprise development and technical cooperation to achieve all goals.

Funding Secured for Lao Dam Project

The Nam Theun 2 Power Company (NTPC) announced that it has signed the financing documentation for the \$1.25 billion Nam Theun 2 dam project in the Lao PDR. When completed in 2009, the 1,070 MW Nam Theun 2 Hydroelectric Project will sell 95% of its electricity production to Thailand, making Nam Theun 2 the largest cross-border power project in Asia. In April, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank approved loan guarantees that allowed the financing to proceed.

After more than a decade of analysis, planning and negotiations, NTPC was established in 2002 to develop, own and operate the Nam Theun 2 Project. NTPC will also be responsible for a

robust program of environmental and social safeguards that were required for World Bank backing. The revenues from the project are expected to bring in almost \$2 billion for tiny, landlocked Laos over the first 25 years of commercial operations. Hydroelectric revenues will undergo strict international oversight to ensure the larger goals of poverty reduction, environmental protection and national development are met.

Upcoming Events

- XXIII IOC General Assembly, Paris, June 21-30, ioc.unesco.org
- 22nd Int'l Tsunami Symposium, Crete, June 27-29 www.gein.noa.gr/English/tsunamis.htm
- 15th World Conference on Disaster Management, Toronto, July 10-13 www.wcdm.org
- Second APEC Ocean-related Ministerial Meeting, Bali, September 16-17 www.aomm2.dkp.go.id

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